



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GOVERNOR PROCLAIMS OCTOBER AS DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AWARENESS MONTH

NASHVILLE—Governor Don Sundquist has issued a proclamation designating October as a month to generate awareness about the talents and abilities of Tennessee's citizens with disabilities.

"New Freedom for the Twenty-First Century" is the theme of the 2002 National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The theme refers to President Bush's New Freedom Initiative plan for persons with disabilities. The plan seeks to reduce barriers to people with disabilities and ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to develop skills, work productively and participate in community life. This effort will allow America to draw on the talents and creativity of all its citizens.

"Providing greater access to technology and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities enhances their dignity and independence which can contribute significantly to our economy by reducing the cost of benefits and increasing productivity," said Governor Sundquist.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) within the Department of Human Services provides services to persons with disabilities. Approximately 4,500 individuals gained employment after completing rehabilitation programs during fiscal year 2001-02, and more than 50,000 Tennesseans received rehabilitation services. These services included diagnosis, treatment, training, counseling, job placement assistance and post-employment services.

"We can't afford, either morally or financially, to lose the contributions that persons with disabilities bring, not only to the workplace, but also to mainstream community life. In the American tradition, we celebrate the various differences in language, culture, viewpoint and experience which contribute to a stronger nation," Human Services Commissioner Natasha Metcalf said.

Eighteen Tennessee Rehabilitation Centers located in rural communities throughout the state and the comprehensive Tennessee Rehabilitation Center at Smyrna provide additional vocational rehabilitation services.

The Tennessee Committee for Employment of People with Disabilities and the Division of Rehabilitation Services staff are working with businesses and agencies across the state on activities recognizing Disability Employment and Assistive Technology Awareness Month. Attached is a partial list of scheduled events.

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH SCHEDULE

October 1 – 31	Official Kick-off for Activities in the Metro Public Schools Contact: Jackie Page (615) 862-6492	Nashville
October 8	Area Recognition Awards Luncheon Contact: Carol Martin (423) 634-6725	Chattanooga The Chattanooga
October 9	Community TRC Open House Contact: Kara Huckaby (931) 380-2250	Columbia TN Rehabilitation Center
October 10	TRC Disability Awareness Day Contact: Melody Griffin (615) 459-6811 ext 197	Smyrna TN Rehabilitation Center
October 11	Community TRC Open House Contact: Ken Arnold (731) 584-7015	Camden TN Rehabilitation Center
	Area Recognition Awards Luncheon Contact: John Dunahoo (731) 286-8313	Dyersburg TN Rehabilitation Center
October 15	Community TRC Open House Contact: Karen Baker (615) 898-8088	Murfreesboro TN Rehabilitation Center
	Annual Awards Recognition Ceremony of Nashville Mayor's Advisory Committee Contact: Jackie Page (615) 862-6492	Nashville John F. Kennedy Center
October 16	Disability Mentoring Day Contact: Trish Farmer (615) 313-4907	Statewide Recognition
	Community TRC Open House Contact: Brenda Musgrave (931) 648-5560	Clarksville TN Rehabilitation Center
	Community TRC Open House Contact: Delwyn G. Smith (423) 478-0332	Cleveland TN Rehabilitation Center
	Community TRC Open House Contact: Alan Jenkins (423) 542-4159	Elizabethton TN Rehabilitation Center
	Community TRC Open House Contact: Patricia Plumlee (615) 790-5509	Franklin TN Rehabilitation Center
	Community TRC Open House Contact: Suzanne Hilgadiack (615) 451-5826	Gallatin TN Rehabilitation Center
	Community TRC Open House Contact: Stephen Dugger (423) 639-5148	Greeneville TN Rehabilitation Center
	Community TRC Open House Contact: Deborah Michael (931) 723-5070	Manchester TN Rehabilitation Center
	Community TRC Open House Contact: James Brown (865) 981-2382	Maryville TN Rehabilitation Center
	Community TRC Open House	Union City

	Contact: Margaret L. Neal (731) 884-2600	TN Rehabilitation Center
October 18	Community TRC Open House Contact: David Parrish (731) 644-7363	Paris TN Rehabilitation Center
October 22	Community TRC Open House Contact: Sandra Shepherd (931) 526-4721	Cookeville TN Rehabilitation Center
October 23	U.S. Department of Energy/ORO Contractor Awareness Program Contact: Kevin Wright (615) 532-6553	Oak Ridge The Mall of Oak Ridge
October 24	TRC Disability Mentoring Day Contact: Susan Welchance (615) 459-6811 ext 119	Smyrna TN Rehabilitation Center
	Community TRC Open House Contact: Debra Riddle (931) 962-1162	Winchester TN Rehabilitation Center
October 30	Community TRC Open House Contact: Elizabeth Strode (931) 685-5017	Shelbyville TN Rehabilitation Center